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Subject: The Religion of Hope.

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OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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# THE RELIGION OF HOPE.

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“For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”—ROM. VIII. 24.

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Not only is the eighth of Romans the most profound in its interpretation of the higher forms of spiritual life, but in no other part of the New Testament that I know of is there so profound and affecting a view of the condition of men under nature. In the context the apostle says, “We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to-wit, the redemption of our body.”

Then comes the text—“For we are saved by hope,” etc.

The apostle, then, has a full recognition of the mysteries of life and of the struggles of life—especially as they turn upon the question of character. All the perplexities which arise, the aspirations, the self-condemnation, the yearnings, the disappointments, the conflicts which men have through their imagination and in the whole realm of conscience, come up before the apostle’s mind; and the way out of them is by the portal of hope. The Christian scheme, as it is centered in love, is characterized, throughout, by the element of hope. Nor do I know of any other development of religious feeling that has taken on a systematic form in the world, which has had hope for its genius and its distinctive peculiarity.

There has been a struggle toward a universal religion in all nations more or less imperfectly developed, usually organized around some one or two of the great passions or sentiments of human nature. Fear has been the most universal impulse. In almost all the religions outside of Christianity, and to a large extent in the preliminary developments of Christianity under the system of the Jews, fear held a preponderant position. And to-day, men worship, throughout the globe, *for fear of the gods*. They deny themselves

pleasures, or they take on unwelcome duties, under the impulse of fear. This is a motive of great consequence; but it is intrinsically low in the moral scale. So long as men are what they now are, they never will get along without the principle of fear. It is scarcely to be conceived that anybody will rise so high in the scale as not to have fear, either in its latent and indirect or in its open action. The lower men are, the more positive must fear be in them.

The neglect of duties or inspirations of duty must be accompanied with such a vivid and distinct sense of fear as to wake up the dormant and comparatively inelastic and insensitive natures of undeveloped men. But as men grow in culture, fear assumes less and less a distinct and overt form, or becomes latent. For instance, it is fear of hunger to-morrow that drives the savage to the least industry to-day. But as we become civilized, we do not earn our daily bread by the direct impulse of fear, but from an indirect and latent form of it. We are not conscious of it until we analyze ourselves, and bring it up to the surface. But with the love of activity, with the impulse of ambition, with all the variety of motives which inspire industry, there is also a cautionary feeling. And when fear has taken the shape of caution, it is an element of sagacity and discrimination, and works in almost all proportions, with almost all faculties, and does not work solely and sovereignly in and of its own self.

Religion in its earlier stages derives important help from fear; and as men are uncultured there must be more and more of it. That part of religion and those aspects of government which take hold on fear become more and more imperative as you go down the scale, and as moral sensibility wanes; and when you come to the point where men are but little better than animals, you cannot govern them in any other way than that in which you govern animals. As it is the goad and the whip that stir up the lazy ox, so it must be the goad and the whip that shall produce moral sensibility in men who are but little above the ox. But as you rise from this low condition, the number of possible motives increases, and you can work the same and better results by another and ascending class of stimulants, till by and by men lose a consciousness of fear, although in a minor and covert way it is still brought to bear upon them.

But when fear is the generic impulse of religion, religion is usually superstitious. It seldom exalts the character. It may serve to correct in men some external and more glaring crimes and vices and sins, but it never makes rich manhood. Fear never wove a character full of curious threads and figures. It is a coarse-handed,



strong-palmed, but not skillful-fingered, causation. If you are to make men large, full in the subtle elements of character, some higher inspiration than fear is necessary to be their schoolmaster.

In all religions conscience, too, has been a fundamental element. It is a fundamental element in the Christian religion. It is required in directing practical efforts. It is employed to hold in subjection men's impetuous and inharmonious passions.

Conscience is the sense of right, with the corresponding sense of the reverse—wrong. But when it is enlightened, when it acts under the influence of reason, and in connection with the imagination, and with an idealized sense of the divine law, and of the possibilities of human character, it can never bring peace; it can never produce happiness.

The whole seventh of Romans is occupied with the natural history of a conscientious man who is determined to be happy in the attempt to live rightly; and we see the fruit of it. When a man acts under the influence of conscience, the law, to him, is higher at every step than his fulfillment of it. Conscience grows in its requisitions faster than human life can fulfill them. A low conscience may not trouble one; but a conscience that is idealized or enlightened will be at once the provocation and the mockery of every man's attempt to live a high and resplendently holy life. There can be no settled peace built upon conscience, in the higher forms of Christian living. It is the popular saying that no man can be happy who has not a sound conscience, and that if a man has a sound conscience he need not fear anybody. This is true in men's civil relations. We do not need to fear the law when we have our conscience on our side. If a man has fulfilled the duties which are imposed upon him by the laws of the land and his social relations, and has a conscience void of offense, he is without that solicitude which men excite among each other. When, however, he contemplates not the ideal of civil law, nor that of social or public sentiment, but develops before his mind the divine ideal of character, the inward life, the richness and depth and perfectness and sweetness and loveliness of true manhood; when he unites in his thought the two worlds—the physical world with its developments, and the spiritual world with its elements—and brings the Divine nature itself beneath the horizon, then, if he attempts to live a perfect life as indicated by this higher rule or ideal, conscience must forever be his tormentor. We never can be as good as we think we ought to be. We never are as fine as our conscience interprets refinement to be. We never are as pure as our conception of purity. We never gain such control of our passions that they

do not have their throbs and fevers. We are forever under the dominion, to a certain extent, of our lower nature; and if a man's peace is to be derived from the testimony of his conscience that he is perfect, peace will be unknown to him. Nay, there have been no more affecting instances of a want of peace than those which have been developed in the experience of righteous men—men who were putting forth every power of their nature to live justly, but who had in themselves testimony that they were falling short in every point of their ideal. If religion centers on conscience you cannot derive the element of peace from it. You can get inspiration enough, quickening enough, stimulus enough,—but not peace.

Now, no scheme is Christian whose predominant results are not recognized. Developed natures are more subject to disturbance than natures that are undeveloped. All natural religions bring men so far along as to disquiet them. They bring them so far as to raise in them an ambition of goodness, and an aspiration toward goodness, such that they make the most potent efforts toward it; but all mere natural religion stops short of producing the conditions of peace in men. Christianity alone secures peace. The genius of Christ's religion is to yield what the apostle calls, "The fruit of the Spirit." When the Spirit has carried religion to its ripeness so that it bears fruit, what is that fruit? It is love, joy, and peace—the three elements which are scarcely to be found in the results of any natural system of religion—love universal; joy, of which there is more seed planted and less reaped than of any other quality in the universe; and peace, which sleep cannot bring, nor the will enforce, nor any ingenuity or curious contrivance distil upon the soul, but which, if it come at all, must come from the heavenly realm. Men can sooner divide with their hands the moisture of the seas, and scatter it abroad and bedew the flowers with its gracious night-chrism, than they can give peace to their fellow men. We can give excitement, we can give some forms of rude joy; but a settled indwelling and abiding peace—who can bring it to himself, or give it to another?

The fruit of the Spirit is love, as opposed to the whole flow of natural selfishness; joy, as opposed to the sadness which proceeds from the constant misinterpretations and mistakes of life; and, more strange than all, in this vast creation which hath been groaning and travailing in pain until now—peace. And it is the genius of Christianity that it has the power to produce love and joy and peace. And if Christianity produces these, it must produce them with all the facts of man's organization and condition in view—it must be because there is in the God who constructed the world



and its system, and who has revealed the Christian faith, a nature that stands over against the facts and conditions of men so as to be in sympathetic adaptation to them. It fits the actual facts in the human condition, as will fall out in this discussion.

The production of this fruit—love, joy, and peace—will throw remarkable light, then, upon the nature of Christianity, when we consider what a state of things Christianity is designed to deal with.

Consider, in the first place, that it is not a glozing compromise; that it is not a system of indifference which tends to make it a matter of unimportance whether a man is good or bad. Righteousness has nowhere else such intense motives as in Christianity. Nowhere else is it required that manhood should be made up of such precious materials; that it should rise so high; or that it should be so comprehensive. Nowhere else is the aim of living made so conspicuous—namely, the perfection of men in Christ Jesus. Whereas in other religions men are made perfect in their relations with each other by an outward morality and a condition of good citizenship, Christianity counts these things as mere rough foundations, and demands that a man should be made perfect in the interior life; in the range and reach of the imagination; in the whole round of the intellect; in the whole crystal palace of the moral sentiments. He is there to be so molded, educated, harmonized, balanced, sweetened, perfected, that he shall stand up as a son of God, perfect in Christ Jesus. A man may be endowed with just such faculties as we are, and yet they may be carried so high, and attuned so perfectly, and made so continuously productive and symmetrical, that he is fit to be called, in one sense, equal with Jesus Christ—that is, a fellow-heir with him; one among so many brothers adopted into God's household, with Christ as an elder brother, and standing alongside of him, being possessed of a like character or nature.

Here is a high aim. It has no conformity with a low estate, nor toleration of it. It is not content with a mere worldly prosperity. The manhood which Christianity inspires and contemplates and demands, is the highest manhood conceivable.

Consider, next, what is that condition of things into which men come in this world. Every man is born into the world without his own leave. He cannot take his pick of the faculties that he will bring, but awakes what he is. His nature is determined, not by his will, but by laws occult and unknown. Every man comes into life with a bundle of tendencies which he inherited through his parents, along a certain line of race-qualities. As different letters spell different words in literature, so the different faculties,

in different proportions, in each individual man spell that man's name, as different from the name of every other man. We come into life without any inventory of what we have. We are born with forces beating in us which we do not know the meaning of. We have, when we set out in life, the coarsest, most uncultivated, external character. And this character is to be built up in each individual according to the charter of his inward life. If a man were born symmetric, wholesome in every part, unquestionably this fact would have a direct influence upon his morality. It would give him rest. It would bring no abnormal strain upon any part of him. But if a man be born with an exquisite sense of approbation, so that praise or blame produces in him a feeling of ecstasy or anguish, and if, withal, he be born deformed and with distorted features, so that every eye looks upon him with aversion, has he the same chance to carry himself with an equal balance as that man has who is harmonious without? Is not his physical organization one that is all the time girding and girding upon his most sensitive, his inward, his moral nature? Do not men depend upon their physical conditions for a thousand things which render calm their interior faculties or stimulate them to development?

A lily hits the mark every time. There is no difficulty in planting the seed and having a lily that will with certainty send up its stem and open its pure white flowers. No lily-seed ever opens a duck or a hawk or a blackbird, but always a pure white lily-blossom. Is it so with men? Plant the seed. Up comes a malignant, ugly, selfish, embruted creature. Plant again. Up comes a round, laughing, gay, joyous, sunshiny creature. Plant again. Up comes an intensely practical creature. Plant again. Up comes a low, sensuous nature. Plant again. Up comes a singing poet. Plant again. Up comes a genius for music or painting. As we plant, men unfold every conceivable diversity of qualities. If we plant lilies, the result is the same the world around, with no essential variation; but men, when developed from the seed, manifest traits which differ from those of their immediate progenitors often as widely as it is possible for human nature to differ. If you put men into a temperature where it is winter nine months of the year, and where the other three months are comparatively unfruitful, will their development be the same that it would be if you put them in a temperature where there are eight months of bountiful seasons, and but two or three months of cold weather? Do you not suppose that the climate in which men are reared, and their physical conditions, have a powerful influence upon their moral character? The chances of men who are born where ignorance prevails are not



the same as the chances of men who are born in the midst of schools and churches. A child that is born to a pirate has not the same chance in life as the child that is born to a Howard, or any other philanthropist.

Then, the social influences which surround men have much to do with what they are. Has the child that first sees the light at the Five Points in New York the same chance that the child has whose early associations, and whose thoughts of purity and fidelity and truthfulness, are fostered in the bosom of a high-toned Christian household?

When you come to go down to the root of things, and see what men really are, taking them race by race, and nation by nation, the problem is not so small as men make it out to be, who reason upon mankind. *Mankind* is a generic phrase. We can deal with men very easily till we come to take them stock by stock, community by community, neighborhood by neighborhood, and study minutely all the causes which act upon them, taking into consideration their original construction, their hereditary nature, the conditions under which they exist, and the influence of manners and customs which meet them at their birth, and work upon their nature through life. Every man who is born into this life encounters the requisitions of manhood, and every man who has the inspiration of manhood waked up in him is obliged to begin his development at the point where he finds himself, and under all the restrictions and burdens and trials which belong to his condition; he has to commence his battle and work on the way to perfect manhood with the endowments which he possesses. And the problems are almost as multitudinous as the men who are born into the world. While those who are born of Christian parents, and inherit the influences and tendencies which have been handed down through Christian households for generations back, find comparatively little trouble in living a highly developed life, those who are born of un-Christian parents, and inherit the opposite influences and tendencies, have to toil and struggle against their circumstances and conditions, and find themselves almost irresistibly swept along the downward course.

And yet, Christianity is for all men. It is adapted to all—the high and the low; the well organized and the badly organized. It requires of every man according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not. And over all this mass of men, yet divergent and discordant, the divine Being spreads that system whose central light is hope.

Hope? How can that be? How can it be that the law of God requires love to God and love to man, and that there shall be

a perfect manhood, with this for its nucleating center, about which the crystallization shall take place? Considering the conditions of men, and the circumstances in which they are placed, in life, how can that be the divine law? When you look upon the race of mankind as they are born into life, and as they are, how can you say that Christianity shall be a scheme of hope for them?

"Ye are saved by hope." I can understand it only in one way—namely, by considering that while it is the nature of God to work out for men that ideal, ultimate character to which they are to come, it having pleased him to create them for the conditions in which he has created and re-created them, there is that in his nature which enables him to wait patiently, and mold gently, with paternal fidelity, all these various classes of men, in their several relations, and to give them, every one, such a hold upon him that he shall hope. That is to say, in every step of strife, in every act of yearning, there is something of the Lord Jesus Christ presented as the soul's model, which inspires hope. We are saved, not by what we are, but by what we hope to be. We are saved, not by the purity of our spirit, but by the hope that, striving upward and onward, we shall reach a state where the spirit shall not be unworthy of God.

I did not make myself small as a seed. He that made me small as a seed, and made it necessary that I should raise myself up through dangers and struggles to a higher development, is in us. And he has a heart of love and pity which fits him to be the God of such as we are, working our way toward the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In other words he has the patience to wait. He has a spirit of forgiveness which passes over iniquity and transgression and sin; and every soul that is born into life, no matter how high or how low, no matter under what obstruction or darkness, no matter where, and begins to aspire, has a right to say, "I am saved by hope—not by what I am, but by what God is."

Our children, in the household, when they begin to develop at two or three years of age, are raw in every faculty, forming the absurdest judgments about things, having the most fantastic imaginations, and the most irregular passions and appetites, and not having learned how to develop themselves symmetrically; but we say of them, "They are children." And when they become angry, we sweeten their temper, and bear with them, and forget, with every going down of the sun what there has been of fault in their conduct during the day. We help their imperfection. We remember their transgression but to heal it. And we do for them in proportion to their needs. The child in the household that is nervous,



and irritable, and disagreeable, receives ten times as much sympathy and kindness from the father and mother as the naturally sweet and gentle and equable child.

So we learn by our experience that there is a patience and there is a love which is a medicine for vice. And since the earth is what it is by the decree of God, since men come into life by the everlasting will of God, since men find their way from the conditions in which they were born toward a perfect manhood as far as they go by God's everlasting decrees, it is rational to suppose that over against this struggling mass—the creation groaning and travailing in pain until now—there is a Heart that is competent to meet this troublesome problem, and that out of the heavens will come the love and goodness of God, and all those divine elements which more than make up for the deficiencies of men; that God is still brooding and brooding over them, and still persuading them, and still, by things visible or invisible, by their mistakes and sufferings, by their hopes and joys, by a thousand influences, educating, fashioning, forming them, so that under all conditions they have a right to hope.

If a man sits down and makes an account, saying, "Here is what I am to be, and here is what I am," he cannot but feel, "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" If a man takes the debit side, he cannot find hope or joy. The ideal of Christianity is so high that no man can bear to look at himself over against that magnificent picture.

At a friend's house, lately, I saw what was apparently a little book lying on the table, and I took it up. On the outside was *The Portrait of an Angel*. On opening it, I found that it was a mirror. And oh! what an angel I saw in it!

If a man takes the mirror of an ideal Christian manhood and looks at himself in it, what he sees himself to be is not exactly his pattern of a man in Christ Jesus. All the way through life, if you measure yourself by the law of God, or by the ideal manhood that is in Christ Jesus, there is nothing but despondency, nothing but despair, nothing but hopelessness that can come from it; but if there sits in the center of the universe a great Soul of Love, which, through the long ages, lives but to form and fashion and bring home, finally, sons and daughters to glory, then no man who wants to be a man need have occasion to despair. There is no man who wants to be better, though he is conscious of being burdened with innumerable transgressions in the past, but can be saved by hope. A man who is hopeful says, "The impetuosity of my temper, which I have striven against for months, and which I thought I had conquered, broke

down the barriers yesterday; nevertheless, God is on my side. Though I am bad enough, there is hope for me in the future. There is everything for me in the heart of God; so I will labor and strive on." Your passions are strong; you watch against them with all the power of your will; and yet, in some unfortunate moment you are swept away. As a prairie blazes, and then lies black with ashes when the fire is gone, so your experience, after having taken you through the fire, lands you, often, in ashes and sackcloth. You say, "It is the hundredth time. Woe is me! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And yet, after shame, after mortified pride, after the flagellations of a despotic conscience, there rises up an undiscouraged wish, "Oh, that I might be free!" This is the voice of God calling out from the very depths of the heaven of love, and saying, "Ye are to be saved by hope." There is hope for you. What if in a thousand things you find your petty selfishness creeping in? What if it is like mildew that steals into the most secret places? What if it is like dust that intrudes into the closest-shut watch? What if it is like rust that corrodes whatever it can touch? What if there be ten thousand cutting, wasting evils in you? God made you; he loved you and loves you. Jesus Christ has redeemed you; and he waits upon you and watches you and influences you. You are just as wicked as you think. You are a great deal more wicked. You are under just such condemnations as you think, and they are more awful than you dream. The point where you do not magnify, where you do not realize the truth, is the divine government—the redemptory power which sits in the center of the universe, sovereign and everlasting. God is bringing men out from prison; from Siberian captivity; from dungeons; from every conceivable condition of misery. They are in the midst of all manner of burdens and trials and sufferings, but they are saved by hope; for the Spirit knows what they need better than they do, and prays through them with groanings unutterable; so that they have reason to be hopeful, and to believe that there are in them the beginnings of tendencies which shall lead them upward toward God.

So long as there is this divine love, and this divine yearning, and this divine, guardian care, there is courage for every man who desires to aspire, or wants to go up.

There is not, to-day, in all the world, following the equator round, a seed that has not liberty to sprout and grow if you will put it in the soil. But if you take a seed, no matter what its nature may be, and hide it where the sun cannot find it, there is not in all the summer, on the equator and both sides of it, any influence that can make it sprout.



If men, living in this world under a constitution of infinite patience, gentleness, mercy, love, and hopefulness, choose to sequester themselves from the stimulating light and warmth of the all-merciful God, they can remain outcast, unsprouted and ungrowing. There is not a man, no matter how coarse and animal and low down he may be; there is not a man, however he may be beset and beat about with temptations, that wants to grow, and is growing, even if he makes but one leaf in a year and one joint in a season—there is no such man who may not hope; not because he is so good, but because God is so good; not because of what he has done or is doing, but because of what he means to do hereafter. I do not believe that anybody, in going to heaven, makes a leap so that from being very imperfect here he is, as it were, by a click, transmuted, and made absolutely perfect there. I believe that we go out of this life into conditions of blessedness where temptations are gone; where the passions and appetites are left behind; where motives to good are multiplied; where certainty takes the place of suspense or doubt; and where we go on from point to point upward, those that go there low starting from the low-down point, and those that go there high starting from the high-up point. A man may escape to heaven so as by fire; but he will have to make up there what he omits here. Or if he is far developed when he goes there, he will stand in the midst of thrones and dominions and potentates, by reason of that which he has enabled grace to do for him in this life.

It is not my object, however, so much to open up the doctrine of the future, as to hold the thought of hope and encouragement before every man, whether in the church or out of the church, who is struggling under his own sense of imperfection, and of condemnation in consequence of his failure in his attempt to be a whole man all through, and who, because he is not able to keep up a symmetric obedience and conformity to the ideal which is presented to him of true Christian manhood, is tempted to give up the endeavor. I desire to help those who are in danger of becoming sour through discouragement, and then cynical, and then censorious, watching others, and saying of them, "They are not as good as they pretend. I am not very good, but I am as good as they are." Far better is it for men to know that we are all born into life full of imperfections; that life means all that it was meant to mean; that the theory and problem of human life is development out from the lowest to the highest condition of moral character; that there is a providence exactly adapted to the wants of the race, which supervises them paternally and maternally, and that there is in it not only patience,

but infinite waiting, and love and forgiveness. I desire to say to every man, high or low, good or bad,—Let hope lead you to righteousness. Do not listen to the voice of fear. Your God is love, and your religion is peculiarly inspired by the element of hope. If you have tried to follow the right, and failed, try again. If you have been cast down by your adversary, grasp your weapon and attack him again. If you persevere you will prevail. More are they that are for you than are they that are against you. God is not without witnesses. No one in the universe knows as well as he what the weight of testimony is against bad men, and what they have to suffer. No one understands their case so well as He before whom they are to stand in the judgment. But if you were to gather together all the renowned fathers and tender mothers that are on the populous globe to-day, or that have been since time began, they all would not equal in depth and strength and vastness the sweet tenderness and gentleness that there is in Jesus Christ. The heaven is full of the glory of God, and of the love of God; and it is under the influence of God, and of the future in which we hope to dwell in his presence, that every man strives to be better—that the sinner strives to be good; that the good man strives to be a saint; and that the saint strives to rise still higher.

It is not what we are that saves us. By the grace of God we are to be saved; and that grace is named Love. God brings us to himself, as parents bring their children to themselves, because he loves us.

It is to that Saviour, brethren, that we have given our vows and our allegiance. It is to the name of that Saviour that we owe all that we have had in the past. It is from him that all we hope for in the future is to come.

We are to-day to refresh, by these symbols, our memory of the earthly life of our dear Lord, by which he manifested to us, to the world and to the universe, this nature of divine pity. Rather than that the world should perish, he perished. He gave himself for men. There is a symbolism of divine government. There is an interpretation of divine love and mercy.

As many of you, therefore, as yet feel your need of divine succor; as many of you as feel that by nature you are children of wrath; as many of you as feel that you are imperfect and unworthy; as many of you as feel that you need patience and gentleness and watchfulness, and are willing to accept them at the hands of Christ, and are willing to say to him, "Poor, blind, naked, utterly sinful, I come to thee for succor, and I trust thee"—so many of you have a right, to-day, to partake with us of these emblems.



Oh, guilty lips! oh, heart full of all bitterness! oh, treacherous ones, who have sworn often and broken your vows! do you ask me if you may come? Yes. Not if you come in order to find an apology for evil, but if you come to find a remedy. Has any man here lived by stealing, hating it, and hating himself, and longing to be an honest man, and striving with some success to overcome it, and yet often cast down? And does he look wistful and say, "I wonder if that would help me?" You may come and see if it will help you. Is there any man here who feels what sordidness means, and watches against it, and prays against it, and is betrayed by it, and day by day feels that it is an enemy stronger than he is? Do you say, "I promised God a hundred times that I would overcome it, and every time I have broken my promise, and I am ashamed to pray any more"? Do you look wistfully at this table, and say, "I wonder if I should get any strength if I took those emblems"? If you want to try it, take them. This bread and this wine are not too good for a man who wants to do better, and is in real earnest, trying to be better. These simple memorials are meant to encourage those who want to live a godly life. Come, therefore, and take them, not for the sake of saying, "There is a secret influence in them which rubs out the past, and I am cleared up to this time"; but if you acknowledge that you have been going wrong, and you are sorry for it, and you want to be better in temper, and delivered from every wicked and worldly way, and you mean to reform, and to avail yourself of all the help you can get, and you think that this ordinance will bring you nearer to God, then I say, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you have a right to participate in it. It is for such as you that the Saviour gave his life.

Oh, sinning men, under the condemnation of your own conscience, and under the withering contempt and scorn of your fellow men, you do not know how tenderly God thinks of you, or how his love draws you toward him. Turn from men and ministers and churches if you have received no benefit from them, but turn not away from Christ Jesus; for he sorrows for you. Having died for you once, he now lives forever for you. And because he is so good, you are not so bad but that you may be saved with an everlasting salvation.

I invite all those who are making an effort to live a godly life, in sincerity and in truth, whether they be members of our faith and order or not, whether they belong to the great Protestant body or the great Roman Catholic body, or whether they belong to no church at all; I invite all those who are conscious of sin, and are

striving to break away from it, and want help, to partake of the broken body and the spilled blood of Christ, their Saviour and my Saviour, and the hope of all sinners.

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### PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Thou art bountiful, O Lord our God. The heavens are full of light. Thy ways are light; and yet, to us, they are often dark and obscure. Thou seest the end from the beginning; and yet, to us inextricable confusion exists in affairs. We know not how to compass thee; nor do we know how to understand thy wonderful workings; and we can only trust, and believe that the Judge of all the earth cannot but do right, and that, finally, when we shall behold things in the light of thy countenance, we shall see thy divine wisdom guiding all which seemed irregular, and learn that thou hast wrought out, in thine own way, infinite excellence and infinite glory.

We desire, O Lord, to trust, not in our thought of thee, but in thee. We desire to believe that thou art greater than our utmost stretch of imagination, and that thy greatness is not in power as much as in purity, and in gentleness, and in wisdom, and in love, and in all that makes the soul blessed. Infinite art thou, and infinite art thou in thy moral excellence, which transcends all human experience, and all the following of our imperfect thoughts. And when we rise into thy presence we shall not be disappointed. We shall not find thee different from what we expected in that thou art less excellent; but thy glory will overflow in us in wonder and sweet surprise, and the power of thy presence and the joy and gladness of thy being will kindle in us such joy that spontaneously we shall cry out, as do they that are round about thee, Glory, and honor, and praise, and power and dominion be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever.

And now, O Lord, we desire, wandering in twilight, or in darkness, or in noonday, to have firm trust in thee. And while we may fall one from another, while man may deceive man, while we are in the maze of cunning and deceit, which fills human life with distrust and uncertainty, grant, O Lord our God, that we may find in thee a present help, and an alleviation of fear. Grant that we may find rest and comfort when we are under the dominion of our own selfishness. May we find hope even in the discouragement which we have when we compare our life and character with thy law. May we live by hope, and be sustained from day to day by that which our souls do so much need.

Now, we beseech of thee, O Lord our God, that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon every one especially as he needs. Grant to those in thy presence this day, that their secret desires may come up before thee, interpreted, if not by words, yet by divine insight and understanding. And grant an answer to all those secret prayers which thy people bring to thee, not according to the wisdom of their asking, but according to the wisdom of thy beholding. And if it be best that they should walk in darkness, let not their cry for light bring light too soon. If it be needful for them that the yoke should be borne, or that the burden should be carried, take it not off. Love them, O Father, for their good, and with chastisement make them worthy to be called thy children, if that be best.

We pray that thou wilt grant to all those who are in affliction the saving sense of the divine presence with them. If there are any whose troubles



spring from the ground and the dust, may they feel that they are under the guiding hand of a Father, and that all things shall work together for good to them that love God. May they who are borne down by trials hear thee saying, Though for the present it is not joyous but grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Grant that all who are in affliction may have the blessing of Almighty God resting upon them, and that they may become more humble, more gentle, richer in faith, richer in fore-looking hope.

We pray that thou wilt sustain those who are in the midst of disappointments, who are chafed by cares, and who are perplexed by the various things which surround them. May they look to thee for guidance. And by thy providence wilt thou indicate to them thy will.

We pray that thou wilt make us independent of our circumstances in so far that we shall feel our manhood to be more than property and more than standing. May we be grateful for whatever is round about us that sustains us. And yet may we look to thee as a better portion than anything which the world can give.

We pray that thou wilt draw near this morning to those who need guidance in their households—guidance in respect to their children, and guidance in their domestic relations. O Lord, we pray that thou wilt give the wisdom of patience and gentleness and self-denial to all who need it. And grant that they may be faithful guides whom thou hast appointed to take thine own little ones and bring them up to manhood.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt draw near to those who are separated from their friends; whose hearts are burdened by the absence of those who are near and dear to them. And wilt thou bless those absent ones wherever they are. Will the Lord especially make the light of his countenance to shine upon their way, and be present with them always and everywhere, upon the sea or upon the land, whether they are among strangers or among friends. Be thou around about them, that thy providence may defend them, and lead them to all good. And we pray that thou wilt grant that those who, afar off, to-day, send back yearnings and longings for the companionship of those whom they have left behind, may have the blessing of the Son of God; and may our hearts and theirs unite in a common hope and faith, and in common prayers.

Bless the strangers who are in our midst. Grant that they may have thy guidance in all the lawful errands of life. Save those who are in despair. Give courage to those who seek to build themselves up in life. Grant deliverance to those who are in despondency. Bless the memory of those who are to-day calling back to thee with much home-sickness to their friends who are afar off. Take care, we pray thee, of their households during their absence. And in thine own good time return the wanderers to the center of their hearts' affections, laden with the experiences of God's great goodness to them.

We pray, O Lord, that thy truth may this day be glorified in our midst. May there be some souls thirsting for the water and hungering for the bread of life. We pray that thou wilt bless this church and all its members, and all its schools, and all its varied labors for the welfare of men. Grant that thy Spirit may more and more abound here; as a fire may it consume the dross. May pride and self-seeking and envies and jealousies be unknown in the midst of this people. More and more may men be willing to labor, not for their own honor and glory, but for the glory of God in Jesus Christ, and lay foundations that others may build upon them and take the credit, while they have borne the burden and heat of the day. May there be that disinterestedness in all the members of this church which was in their Master Jesus Christ; and we pray that we may follow him, not alone in joy, but in

sorrow; not alone in victory, but in bearing the cross. So may their life be rich in the sight of God while to men they may seem to be living without joy, without ambition, and without successes. Grant that there may be in them a holy hope, and a yearning and an aspiration for things nobler and better than this life can give them.

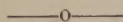
We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the churches of this city, and of the city near to us, and upon the churches throughout our land, of every name. May thy Gospel be more and more faithfully and clearly preached.

We pray for the schools and colleges and seminaries of learning. We pray for the sanctification of newspapers, that they may become, in thy providence, as so many moving institutions carrying light abroad and pouring radiance upon the dark places of the land.

We pray for the poor and the outcast. We pray for those new-made men who yet sit in darkness, and lack schools and culture. Raise up those who shall be willing to spend their lives for the sake of those who are despised. We pray that thou wilt turn the hearts of men to each other, and overcome the conflicts which impend. We pray, O God, that thou wilt be found in the midst of this people, counseling them to wisdom, and guiding them to things which shall be for the furtherance of thine own honor and glory. Let thy kingdom come every where. Let thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*



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